



IS ANTIBACTERIAL SOAP AND HAND SANITIZER WORTH IT?

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The pandemic has changed our lives and forced us to consider personal hygiene more now than ever. With hand washing techniques being broadcasted through every medium, it begs the question — what is the best and most cost effective soap to buy?

According to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the science does not show that antibacterial soaps are any better at preventing illness than washing with plain soap and water. The FDA goes even further and has said that the use of these soaps is not only of questionable efficacy against bacteria and viruses, but that use of these products over an extended period of time may have a potentially negative effect on your health. These products can kill good anti-bacterial flora on your hands making you more subjective to the bad players in the microbe world. Soap companies know most people would associate the word “antibacterial” with “antiviral” or at least believe they only kill the bad germs...but that’s not the case.

In 2016, the FDA issued a rule that banned the use of triclosan, triclocarban and 17 other chemicals in hand and body washes which are marketed as being more effective than simple soap. The FDA, in collaboration with the EPA, is concerned that chemicals such as triclosan can contribute to creating bacteria that are resistant to antibiotics.

In addition to antibacterial soap, hand sanitizer provides the average public with a false sense of security that it kills almost all the bad bacteria. At least 99.9% as they claim, so that is good, right? Wrong! It is not

good. They also tend to not be used correctly. Many of us put a little on our hands, rub them together and wipe any excess on our clothing or other objects. Did you know your hands must be free of grime before using them? That means, as many labels specify, these products are best used after regular soap and water.

Lastly, alcohol-based hand sanitizers don't kill all germs, in particular a stomach bug called norovirus.

Norovirus plagues schools and nursing homes, especially in the winter months. The CDC estimates that annually in the United States, norovirus contributes to about 56,000 hospitalizations and 570 to 800 deaths per year, mostly among young children and the elderly.

The CDC recommends the following when using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol:

- Supervise young children when they use hand sanitizer to prevent swallowing alcohol, especially in schools and childcare facilities.
- Apply enough product on hands to cover all surfaces.
- Rub hands together until hands feel dry. This should take around 20 seconds.

Note: Do not rinse or wipe off the hand sanitizer before it is dry.

You do not need an antibacterial soap or hand sanitizer when soap and water is available. Wash your hands frequently and correctly. Follow these guidelines that have been highlighted by the FDA and CDC:

- Wet your hands with clean running water (warm or cold) and apply soap. Lather your hands by rubbing them together with the soap.
- Scrub all surfaces of your hands, including the palms, backs, fingers, between your fingers, and under your nails. Keep scrubbing for 20 seconds.
- Rinse your hands under clean, running water.
- Dry your hands using a clean towel or air dry them.

Using regular bar soap is still as good as any expensive soap product and remember to follow the directions for proper hand sanitizer application. These common and decades proven public health methods for personal hygiene are still being promoted because they work!